

More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program Guidance

Effective SFY 2009-2010

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Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of this document, “More at Four Program Guidance,” is to provide additional clarification to the requirements, when needed, and to encourage best practices in serving children in the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program. The following guidance is intended to direct local More at Four committees, contractors and sites to adopt policies and implement practices that address critical components of providing high-quality pre-kindergarten that meets the needs of all children.

Section 2: The County/Region More at Four Committee

B. Committee Structure and Meetings

Membership

May the More at Four Committee include members other than those mandated in the requirement?

Yes, besides the mandated members, the following representatives are strongly encouraged:

- a. County cooperative extension agency representative,
- b. Local interagency coordinating council representative,
- c. County/regional departments of health and mental health representative(s),
- d. Early childhood professional organizations representative(s),
- e. Local business community representative(s), and/or
- f. Military representative.

(see Requirements, Sec. 2B, pg. 2-2)

D. Additional Functions – Committee and Contractor

How do committees and contractors plan for meeting the transportation needs of children?

The written transportation plan should address transportation for children to and from all More at Four sites. In developing the plan, the committee and contractor should identify community resources that are available and work with the school system, as feasible. Legislation allows for transportation of any More at Four child to any More at Four site on public school buses. If, after careful review, it is determined that transportation cannot be provided, the contractor must maintain a written record of what was decided.

(see Requirements, Sec. 2D, pg. 2-4)

What are the components of an effective transition plan?

The written transition plan should be developed by the committee and contractor and should include these components:

1. Specify how children will transition into the More at Four classroom.
2. Specify how children will transition into kindergarten.
3. Reflect the diversity and uniqueness of children, families and communities.
4. Be revised as ongoing transition efforts are expanded.

(see Requirements, Sec. 2D, pg. 2-4)

How do committees and contractors help families access health insurance and establish a medical home for their child?

The committee and contractor should work with all More at Four sites and with community health care resources (e.g., Child Care Health Consultants or Health Check coordinators) to assist families in securing health insurance and a medical home (primary health care provider) for their child. At a minimum, the contractor should work with sites to give families information about the Health Check and NC Health Choice health insurance programs and about the importance of a medical home. The contractor should ensure that this information is available for all families of children served by More at Four. The information may be distributed: 1) at a county wide event; 2) at the site level; and/or 3) directly to families. In addition, the contractor also may choose to give families a list of local primary health care providers.

There are free bilingual materials (English/Spanish) available to order online from the NC Healthy Start Foundation. To order materials online, go to www.nchealthystart.org and click on “Order”.

To view a copy of the “Health Check / NC Health Choice Fact Sheet”, go to:
http://www.nchealthystart.org/downloads2/HCNCHC_Fact_Sheet.pdf

To view “The Right Call Every Time: Your Medical Home” Brochure, go to:
http://www.nchealthystart.org/downloads2/MH_The_right_call.pdf

The “Health Check / NC Health Choice Fact Sheet” is now translated and available online in several languages: Arabic, Chinese, Hmong, Korean, Montagnard, Spanish, and Vietnamese. To print out a copy in one of these languages go to:
<http://www.nchealthystart.org/outreach/index.html>

(see Requirements, Sec. 2D, pg. 2-4)

How do committees and contractors plan for supporting sites in meeting the child health assessment requirement?

The plan to support sites in meeting the child health assessment requirement would include notifying all families at the time of application to the program that the child’s health assessment is expected by the first day of attendance. The contractor and sites should work with the parent/family to coordinate transportation and other appropriate resources, such as the public health department, public school health nurse, child care health consultants, and other health care and medical consultants in the community to help families meet this requirement.

(see Requirements, Sec. 2D, pg. 2-4)

What are the components of a plan for health consultation services for all More at Four sites?

A plan for consultation services for all More at Four sites should address the provision of services to sites from a qualified health consultant (either a licensed pediatric health professional or a health professional with specific training in health consultation for early childhood programs). Such a plan may include defined policies and practices to ensure health promotion and prevention of infection and injury.

(see Requirements, Sec. 2D, pg. 2-4)

Section 3: The More at Four Child

Section 4: The More at Four Site

B. Official More at Four Day and Year

How do sites that are not public schools meet the official day and year requirements?

If a More at Four site is not located in the public schools, the hours of operation for the 6- or 6.5-hour school day should be consistent with the school system in the geographic area where the site is located. Additionally, the site's 180-day schedule should generally track the local public school calendar. Variations from this guidance should be addressed between the contractor and site.

(see Requirements, Sec. 4B, pg. 4-1)

Can home visits and staggered entry be included in the 180-day school year?

Yes, days that are set aside for home visits and for staggered entry at the beginning of the school year may be included as part of the 180-day school calendar year. Throughout the school year a home visit may also count as an attendance day for a child that is unable to come to school due to special circumstances (e.g. extended illness; hospitalization, and recovery).

(see Requirements, Sec. 4B, pg. 4-1)

Can service days used for professional development be included in the 180-day school year?

Yes, up to five days may be set aside for professional development and included as part of the 180-day school calendar year.

(see Requirements, Sec. 4B, pg. 4-1)

C. Program Attendance Policy

How do contractors and sites work with families to support a child's attendance?

Contractors and sites should work with families to support a child's attendance and participation in More at Four. When a child has been absent for three consecutive days, the More at Four site administrator should contact the family and determine the child's participation status. More at Four site administrators should document attempts to contact the family, as well as decisions regarding the child's continued participation in the program. Every effort should be made to maintain the child's placement and participation in More at Four.

(see Requirements, Sec. 4C, pg. 4-1)

E. Fees**How do contractors and sites support children who need care before and/or after the More at Four school day?**

While More at Four dollars cannot be used for wraparound services (time periods before or after the regular school day), sites should try to meet the needs of families and children for full day care. When wraparound services are provided before and/or after the regular school day, during holidays, or summer months, the provider may charge a fee for that service or accept a subsidy voucher from a participating family.

See *Subsidy Q&A Related to More at Four* at
<http://www.osr.nc.gov/MoreFour/ProgramGuidelines.asp>

(see Requirements, Sec. 4E, pg. 4-1)

Section 5: The More at Four Classroom

A. Child Health Assessments

Which forms are appropriate for completing the child health assessment?

Sites are encouraged to use the Kindergarten Health Assessment Report (Form # PPS-2K Rev. 1/08), which is available through local health departments, public schools, and at <http://www.nchealthyschools.org>.

For sites that use other forms, additional documentation may be necessary to meet all the More at Four requirements.

A child's last allowable Medicaid health assessment will meet this requirement.

(see Requirements, Sec. 5A, pg. 5-1)

Can all components of the health assessment be completed during the child's physical exam?

Yes, including the vision, hearing and dental screenings.

(see Requirements, Sec. 5A, pg. 5-1)

How should sites work with families to ensure the child health assessment is completed?

If a child's health assessment is not in place on the first day of attendance, the family/parent should be given written notice to have the assessment completed within 30 calendar days of the notice date or provide written evidence within 30 days of a date that the child has been scheduled for the health assessment.

If the assessment is not completed within 30 calendar days, or an appointment has not been made or has not been kept for the child's health assessment, the parent/family should be notified by the contract administrator that the child will lose his/her More at Four placement unless there are extenuating circumstances. Contractors may request an exception to these timelines based on extenuating circumstances.

Contractors should make every effort to assist families in obtaining a health assessment for their child and should enlist help from other community organizations and agencies.

(see Requirements, Sec. 5A, pg. 5-1)

B. Developmental Screening

What is the purpose of developmental screening?

Early detection is essential to increasing the likelihood that children at risk of developmental delay and those with disabilities receive special services quickly. Developmental screening helps identify children who should be referred for further evaluation based on concerns identified in one or more developmental domains. http://www.osr.nc.gov/_pdf/EPBrief--DevelopmentalScreening.pdf

(see Requirements, Sec. 5B, pg. 5-1)

How should screening be conducted for children whose home language is not English?

Children who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency should be screened in their native language. Instruments in the child's native language, bilingual/bicultural assessors and/or translators should be used when they are available.

(see Requirements, Sec. 5B, pg. 5-1)

C. Early Learning Standards

What training is available for Foundations?

Introductory training is available online at <http://www.osr.nc.gov/Foundations/foundation-OnlineTrainingTool.asp>. After completing the online training, a certificate should be requested to verify completion.

(see Requirements, Sec. 5C, pg. 5-2)

D. Curricula

What training is needed to implement the approved curriculum?

Training in appropriate use of curriculum should be part of initial staff development for all teaching staff that have not previously completed appropriate training. Ongoing professional development with staff should support implementation of the selected curriculum.

(see Requirements, Sec. 5D, pg. 5-2)

E. Instructional Assessment

What training is needed to implement the instructional assessment?

Training in appropriate use of assessment instruments for instructional planning should be part of initial professional development for all teaching staff that have not previously completed appropriate training on these instruments. Ongoing professional development

should support instructional assessment and planning. http://www.osr.nc.gov/_pdf/EPBrief--Assessments07.10.06.pdf

(see Requirements, Sec. 5E, pg. 5-2)

F. Staff-to-Child Ratio and Class Size

How do sites meet the needs of children through inclusive settings?

Classrooms are encouraged to be inclusive. The value of inclusive settings ensures that each child's strengths, unique learning needs, and abilities are addressed. Classrooms that provide inclusive settings may require an adult to child ratio smaller than 1 to 9.

(see Requirements, Sec. 5F, pg. 5-3)

I. Family Engagement

What are the components of effective family engagement?

Families are integrally involved in the learning and development of their child(ren). Therefore, the development of a comprehensive plan for family engagement is critical to the success of children during the pre-kindergarten year and in subsequent years as well. In an effort to support family engagement, programs should develop a plan to implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making. Meaningful family engagement occurs when early childhood programs and other community organizations and agencies actively reach out to families in meaningful ways, and when families actively support their child(ren)'s learning and development.

Administrators and teachers should provide meaningful opportunities for parents and families that build reciprocal relationships and foster a bond among those involved in the education of the More at Four child. Relationship-building experiences that promote ongoing, two-way communication and use a variety of methods that reflect the linguistic preferences of the family are encouraged. Following are some examples that are encouraged:

1. Home visits (initial and ongoing), particularly for purposes of learning about the child, his/her family, and family routines;
2. Formal and informal parent/teacher conferences in which both parties share information;
3. Classroom visits and options for parents and families to participate in classroom activities;
4. Parent education (e.g. development of parent centers, one-on-one learning opportunities, skill development classes, and identification and connections to community resources such as "Parents as Teachers");
5. Family involvement in decision making about their own child and about their child's early childhood program in general;
6. Opportunities to engage families outside of the regular school day.

Local More at Four families may be included in a program's fund raising activity if the following conditions are met:

- a. Families are notified that participation in a program's fund raising activities is voluntary and will not affect the child's placement and participation in More at Four;
- b. Local programs should maintain documentation verifying that families were informed of their right to participate or decline participation in the activity.

(see Requirements, Sec. 5I, pg. 5-3)

Section 6: The More at Four Staff

A. Administrator Licensure and Credentials

Are there other requirements for principals beyond licensure?

In addition to being licensed, principals in public schools are encouraged to have coursework in early childhood education.

(see Requirements, Sec. 6A, pg. 6-1)

B. Teacher Education, Licensure and Credentials

Can OSR support teachers in nonpublic schools to obtain and/or renew the required license?

Yes, the Teacher Licensure Unit (TLU) within the Office of School Readiness/NC Department of Public Instruction provides mentoring and evaluation services in nonpublic schools to support More at Four (MAF) teachers throughout the licensure process.

<http://www.osr.nc.gov/TLU/TLUindex.asp>

(see Requirements, Sec. 6B, pg. 6-1)

Should sites make efforts to hire bilingual staff?

Yes, sites that serve children and families who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency are encouraged to hire bilingual staff if at all possible.

(see Requirements, Sec. 6B, pg. 6-1)

E. Instructional Staff Standards

Are More at Four Programs required to adhere to state and federal labor laws?

Yes, programs providing More at Four Pre-Kindergarten services should refer to state labor laws pursuant to the North Carolina Wage and Hour Act (<http://www.nclabor.com/wh/wh.htm>) and to federal and labor laws pursuant to the Fair Labor Standards Act (<http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/>) regarding questions about wage and hour rules and employment classifications (i.e., exempt versus nonexempt) of More at Four instructional staff based on educational degrees and credentials.

(see Requirements, Sec. 6E, pg. 6-4)

What professional development is available and required/recommended for instructional staff?

The Office of School Readiness will offer professional development opportunities for teachers, teacher assistants, and administrators, to the extent feasible and that funds are available. Contractors, subcontractors – including principals and directors – and classroom staff may be required to participate in targeted professional development specified by the Office of School Readiness based on identified program needs.

Teachers with Initial Provisional Lateral Entry B-K License, Provisional B-K, or B-K Standard Professional I License are subject to the North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) Teacher Licensure Policy and procedures, which requires teachers to participate in other orientation, training, and ongoing professional development activities.

1. Public Schools. Lateral entry teachers working in public school More at Four classrooms will follow the Local Education Agency's (LEA) professional development plan.
2. Nonpublic Schools. Teachers in nonpublic More at Four classrooms who are participating in the Lateral Entry Teacher Program (LETP) and the Beginning Teacher Support Program (BTSP) will follow the Office of School Readiness-Teacher Licensure Unit (TLU) professional development plan. The TLU will collaborate with local More at Four contractors and their administrators to meet these teachers' professional development requirements.

Local professional development opportunities for More at Four teachers, teacher assistants, and administrators should include, at a minimum, (to the extent feasible and when funds are available):

1. Orientation sessions for new teachers, assistants, and administrators that provides an overview of the focus and purpose of the More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program, program requirements, and program elements.
2. Ongoing professional development by qualified presenters and based on the needs of the staff and, at a minimum, addressing the following topics:
 - Introduction to *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success*
 - Facilitating child growth, development and learning
 - Providing a developmentally appropriate learning environment (understanding and implementing designated curriculum)
 - Fostering self-regulation in children
 - Implementing developmentally appropriate assessment strategies (developmental screening; ongoing assessment tools or strategies)
 - Effectively communicating and participating within the educational environment (professional roles/standards; reflective practice; essential roles of family members in children's development and learning; building family and community relationships)

(see *Requirements, Sec. 6E, pg. 6-4*)

How many service days may be used for professional development for instructional staff?

Up to five of the 180 More at Four service days may be used for state- or county/regional-sponsored professional development, to the extent that additional hardships are not created for children and families in the More at Four classroom. More at Four staff may attend more than five days of professional development during the school year, but no more than five service days can be set aside for this purpose.

(see Requirements, Sec. 6E, pg. 6-4)

Section 7: Evaluation and Monitoring

A. ECERS-R Assessments

What happens when a classroom does not meet the minimum standard (5.0) on ECERS-R?

1. Initial Classroom Assessment @ less than minimum standard: An Enhancement Plan is required when the classroom ECERS-R score does not meet the minimum program standard (5.0) on the first classroom assessment.
2. Subsequent Classroom Assessment @ less than minimum standard: A more intensive Intervention Plan is required for a classroom that scores less than the minimum (5.0) during the follow-up evaluation as a part of the Enhancement Plan process.
3. The Enhancement and/or Intervention Plans and timeline must be submitted to the More at Four local contractor and the Office of School Readiness.
4. Follow-up assessments contracted by the state office will be conducted to ensure the minimum rating is met.
5. Classrooms may be exempt from the Enhancement/Intervention Plan requirements if the teacher or classroom site has changed since the ECERS-R assessment occurred. However, such classrooms would be subject to a new assessment.

(see Requirements, Sec. 7A, pg. 7-1)

C. Program and Fiscal Monitoring of Local More at Four Pre-K Programs

What are the required components of the Contractor and Site Monitoring Tools?

The required Contractor and Site Monitoring Tools are organized by specific program or fiscal requirements. The tools list specific documentation required to support the cited requirement/standard, and tracking columns are included for self-monitoring. Supporting documentation, listed under the “source” column, should be available for review by the local contractor and by Office of School Readiness personnel during monitoring. To download Tools see <http://www.osr.nc.gov/MoreFour/forms.asp>

(see Requirements, Sec. 7C, pg. 7-1)

What are the program and fiscal monitoring responsibilities at the Site Administrator level?

1. Each site must monitor its own program and classrooms on a regular basis using the More at Four Site Monitoring Tool (Site Tool).
2. The Site administrator (or designee) monitors More at Four sites/classroom(s) and completes the Site Tool.
3. When a particular standard or requirement has not been met, each site should establish a written plan (which may include exceptions from the state office) to meet compliance. The plan should define who is responsible for accomplishing the task, a

timeline, and information to indicate progress toward meeting the requirement.

4. By November 30th of the program year, the site administrator completes, signs (Section F. Assurance Statement), dates an original copy of the completed Site Tool, attaches written action plans for items not met, and submits to the local contractor. NOTE: If a site or classroom becomes a More at Four site or classroom after October 1, a Site Tool should be completed and submitted to the local contractor within 90 days of the first attendance day at that site/classroom.
5. Information collected with this tool will be used by the local contractor to confirm, record, and report local site compliance to the Office of School Readiness using the More at Four Contractor Monitoring Tool (Contractor Tool).

(see Requirements, Sec. 7C, pg. 7-1)

What are the program and fiscal monitoring responsibilities at the Local Contractor level?

1. Local contractors monitor sites/classrooms and complete the More at Four Contractor Monitoring Tool (Contractor Tool).
2. When a particular standard or requirement has not been met, each contractor should establish a written plan (which may include exceptions from the state office) to meet compliance. The plan should define who is responsible for accomplishing the task, a timeline, and information to indicate progress toward meeting the requirement.
3. The local contractor (or designee) ensures that:
 - a. By November 30th of the program year an original copy of the Site Tool from each More at Four site is on file. (See NOTE in item 4, above.)
 - b. Section D (Self-Monitoring) on the More at Four Contractor Tool is completed using results from the Site Tool. Specific written action plans, timelines, exceptions from the state office, and information to indicate progress toward meeting a requirement for any site/classroom must be recorded and attached to the monitoring tool.
 - c. The Contractor Tool will be made available to Office of School Readiness (OSR) personnel for review during a scheduled monitoring/compliance review. Such review will occur during the months of February through April of the program year. OSR personnel will contact the local contractor (or designee) to set a specific date and time to review monitoring results.
 - d. No later than February 28th of the program year, at least one annual site visit will be made to each More at Four program site/classroom. During the visit, the Site Tool should be discussed and validated by the local Contractor (or designee). For sites/classrooms that have not met specific requirements, written plans, attached to the Site Tool, to meet compliance should be reviewed and monitored for completion. This may require additional classroom visits by the Contractor (or designee).
 - e. By May 15, Sections E (Contractor Monitoring Visits) and F (Assurance Statement) of the Contractor Tool are completed, signed, and dated. Any written

action plans, timelines, exceptions from the state office, and other information to support progress toward requirements not met are attached and mailed to the state office.

4. Results are reported to the local More at Four Committee prior to **May 31st** of the program year. Information included in the tool should be considered in planning for the upcoming program year.

(see Requirements, Sec. 7C, pg. 7-1)

What are the program and fiscal monitoring responsibilities at the State level?

Visits by Office of School Readiness (OSR) personnel may be made to programs to ensure standards and documentation are in place with the program and fiscal requirements, as well as to offer technical assistance to improve program quality.

Reporting and monitoring information may also be obtained through the More at Four County Plan (MAFPlan) and the More at Four Reporting System (MAFKids). These systems include extensive information about children, staff, and programs. Child information will include the necessary information required to support the State's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

1. OSR personnel will schedule monitoring during February through April to review results, including action plans, collected and documented on the Contractor and Site Tools by the county/region contractor.
2. OSR personnel will:
 - a. Validate that all requirements have either been met or plans for achieving compliance are in place. Validation is a process that requires comparing results reported on the monitoring tools ("Yes, No, N/A, Plan") with the evidence to support the "Yes, No, N/A, Plan" selections. Validation occurs when there is agreement between what the local contractor (or designee) reports and what the monitor (state program personnel) reviews. If specific program or fiscal requirements have not been met, plans and a timeline for meeting compliance will be discussed.
 - b. Confirm that the Contractor (or designee) will submit final monitoring results, summarized on the Contractor Tool with supporting plans for items not met, to the state office by May 15. This may require additional follow-up (Email communication, telephone calls, technical assistance visits) by OSR to provide support in areas not fully implemented.
3. By May 31, OSR personnel reviews, signs, dates Section G (State Office Validation), and returns a copy of the Contractor Tool to the local Contractor (or designee) along with any plans for meeting the program and fiscal requirements.
4. An original copy of the tool will be maintained by the state office as evidence of program requirements compliance.

(see Requirements, Sec. 7C, pg. 7-1)

Is technical assistance for classrooms available or required from the State Office?

The intent of classroom technical assistance is to help early childhood professionals identify areas of strength in classroom practice and areas in which support is needed. Classrooms may be designated for technical assistance based on the results of formal assessments, observations made by state personnel during site visits, at the request of the contractor, or based on other sources of reporting. Classroom technical assistance may include the development of a plan for professional growth, and appropriate follow-up by local or State Office personnel.

The OSR/Teacher Licensure Unit has a separate mentoring and evaluation process for participating teachers.

(see Requirements, Sec. 7, pg. 7-1)

D. Monitoring Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Maintenance of Effort (MOE)**What is TANF and MOE?**

The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds services and assistance to income-eligible families who have a child living in the home. The TANF block grant, administered by the State Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), has an annual cost sharing requirement, referred to as the Maintenance of Effort requirement (MOE). Every federal fiscal year, each state must spend a certain amount of its own money to help eligible families in ways that are consistent with the purpose of the TANF program.

(see Requirements, Sec. 7D, pg. 7-3)

How does TANF and MOE relate to More at Four?

The More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program, designed to provide high-quality pre-kindergarten experiences that may allow parents to work, may count as MOE. (See [More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program Fiscal and Contract Manual](#)).

(see Requirements, Sec. 7D, pg. 7-3)

Are More at Four programs monitored to verify children's eligibility for the TANF/MOE match?

Local More at Four programs are subject to monitoring visits by the DHHS Division of Budget and Analysis. The Division of Budget and Analysis, in conjunction with the State More at Four Program, will select administrative programs for monitoring visits. Monitoring visits are not audits, but reviews of randomly selected child records, to ensure that funds to be counted as MOE meet the basic guidelines as outlined in the *More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program Fiscal and Contract Manual*.

(see Requirements, Sec. 7D, pg. 7-3)

How do More at Four programs maintain current child information for MAFKids?

Local More at Four programs should inform eligible More at Four families, at the time of their enrollment into the program, that they should update the program if any of the following information changes during the More at Four program year. Families should be informed that More at Four services would continue for their child and would not be affected by the information update/change except where noted below with an asterisk (*).

1. Name changes
2. Child's living arrangement changes related to who has legal custody and/or guardianship of the child
3. *If a child moves or relocates or leaves the program

(see Requirements, Sec. 7D, pg. 7-3)